



Guidance for Preparing Project Assessment and Evaluation Plans (PAEPs)

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As part of the grant agreement, all State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) grant recipients will prepare a Project Assessment and Evaluation Plan (PAEP) at the initiation of their project to summarize how project performance will be assessed, evaluated, and reported.

The goals of a PAEP are as follows:

- To provide a framework for assessment and evaluation of project performance.
- To identify measures that can be used to monitor progress towards achieving project goals.
- Provide a tool for grant recipients and grant managers to monitor and measure project progress and guide final project performance reporting that will fulfill grant agreement requirements.
- To provide information to help improve current and future projects.
- To maximize the value of public expenditures to achieve environmental results.

The attached outline and guidance (Attachments 1 through 7) provides assistance to grant recipients preparing and implementing a PAEP. It is a practical guide for evaluation of project performance. The information in this guidance should prepare you to design and carry out a PAEP, provide you with tools to track project progress, and link progress with desired outcomes. It could also help you identify any necessary adjustments within the constraints of your allocated budget during the course of the project and facilitate final report preparation.

We realize that the State Water Board grant recipients come in all shapes and sizes. Some recipient organizations have full-time staff and annual budgets exceeding \$1,000,000; others have far smaller budgets and rely almost entirely on volunteers. Recipient organizations also range widely in their goals—from providing technical assistance and enhancing public awareness, to delivering water for drinking and irrigation, to researching new management practices or monitoring water quality.

Likewise, the activities being supported by the State Water Board funds are very diverse, so PAEPs will need to identify performance measures or indicators that best fit the needs

of a particular project and the associated activities. In most cases, the identification of several measures will be necessary to evaluate project performance. For example, the success of education and outreach activities can be evaluated through measuring increased community awareness or the level of participation in volunteer monitoring and knowledge of watershed functions. Implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) can be evaluated based on water quality measurements, response of [bioindicators](#), changes in physical characteristics of in-stream habitat conditions, calculated pollutant load reductions, and the number of acres treated. Habitat restoration activities can be evaluated based on acres of wetlands restored, number of off-site causes of bank and bed erosion treated, or feet of stream channel stabilized, as documented with before and after photographs, and/or digitized data layers showing change in the extent or quality of habitat. Projects designed to achieve multiple objectives and create synergies by integrating flood management, water quality protection, water supply reliability and enhancement, and habitat protection/restoration activities will require performance measures that relate to all objectives the project is designed to address.

PAEP Outline and Guidance

The PAEP outline ([Attachment 1](#)) and example tables ([Attachment 2](#)) provide guidance that you can put to use now to implement your project and ensure that your desired outcomes can be achieved. The narrative portion of the plan outline, I. Project Summary and II. Project Goals and Desired Outcomes, can be completed using information presented in your proposal and executed agreement. The example tables are road maps you can use to chart the course of your project activities and measure how far you have gone in achieving your project goals and desired outcomes.

The PAEP groups project activities into five major categories. These categories are 1) Planning, Research, Monitoring, and Assessment, 2) Education, Outreach, and Capacity-building, 3) Habitat Restoration, 4) Load Reduction and 5) Beneficial Use Improvement and Protection. These categories allow you to assemble and organize activities with similar attributes, and evaluate them using a set of performance measures or indicators common to each category. Additional information on appropriate categories for different project activities can be found in [Attachment 3](#). Many grant projects implement multiple activities in more than one category, and Integrated Regional Water Management projects, in particular, are required by design to achieve multiple objectives on a watershed or river basin scale. This system of categories should help simplify the organization of your plan and choice of appropriate indicators for evaluation. The tables present examples of hypothetical projects in each of the five main activity categories. The tables are organized to provide for a simple and concise description of:

- Project goals;
- Desired project outcomes;
- Appropriate project [performance measures](#) which include: 1) [Output Indicators](#) *representing* measures to efficiently track outputs (activities, products (including capital investments, or deliverables) and 2) [Outcome Indicators](#), measures to evaluate change that is a direct result of your work and can be linked through a

- weight-of-evidence approach to your project activities or outputs (e.g. improvements in achieving or restoring multiple beneficial uses, environmental conditions, awareness, participation, or community, landowner, or local government capacity);
- Methods of measurement or tools you will use to document your project performance (e.g. California Rapid Assessment Method, California Department of Fish and Game Monitoring Protocols for fisheries restoration projects); and
 - Measurable [targets](#) that you think are feasible to meet during the project period, such as a 10% increase in community awareness, 90% reduction in invasive species acreage, 50% reduction in pesticide use within your watershed, or a 10% increase in water use efficiency that decreases groundwater use and overdraft.

The example tables ([Attachment 2](#)) include performance measures that are for illustration purposes only. They are intended to show the linkages between project goals, desired outcomes, the types of “output” indicators (activities and interim products), and the types of “outcome” indicators (environmental results and increases in watershed stewardship capacity), that could be used in the overall performance evaluation process. Specific indicators will vary based on project activities and goals and should be derived from those sections in your original proposal that describe the metrics or habitat attributes you intend to collect or document during your project. The list of Core Outcome Indicators ([Attachment 4](#)) should be used as a starting point for identifying appropriate project indicators based on your activity categories.

[Attachment 5](#) includes some example PAEP’s and supporting documents used to develop the PAEP’s. These may be helpful for efficiently developing your project PAEP. [Attachment 6](#) and [Attachment 7](#) include and provide access to additional project performance measurement information that can be used to guide your plan development and implementation.